TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

STATE OF DESERET.

GENTLEMEN,—

Your petitioners beg leave to say that they feel, most sensibly, the many difficulties they are daily called to encounter, in the common concerns of life, for the want of a good education; and this feeling is what prompts them to address you on the present occasion; and

Whereas, under existing circumstances, we cannot hope that our children will be able to attain to greater knowledge than their fathers; and, as we are already a great people, and are continually increasing in numbers, wealth and power, and means to accomplish and do any thing that ought to be done; and are occupying a space in the material world, where Nature, the greatest University of arts and science, can be studied to to its utmost perfection, surrounded as we are by teachers, whose researches are not confined to earth: and,

As we have gathered to this place from the various nations of Christendom, and are of different languages and dialects; of different customs, habits, manners and propensities; arising, in a great degree, from the impress of early examples; with but few books in our midst, and fewer teachers capable of instructing us from those books; while the diversity of knowledge and language in our midst is so great, that it is often difficult to transact the common and necessary business of life; and, unless some general system of education is introduced, those difficulties are likely to continue; and,

As we are now in our infant State, just beginning to exercise the powers and prerogatives that belong to an independent Government; are at that period of time when it is easier to guide the infant mind aright, than it will be to turn the aged from their errors; and we feel that it is of the utmost importance for this State, whose inhabitants are destined to become very numerous, to lay the surest foundation for a system of general education in its infancy, that the rising, and succeeding generations may be benefited, and thereby become assimulated in their general characters and cus-

toms, and educations; so as to produce a oneness of feeling, which is necessary for the peace and prosperity of the Government; and we believe that more can be effected towards accomplishing this object now, than at any future period, and at less expense; and,

As means are not wanting to make a beginning; and though it may be small, wealth and facilities will increase with the increase of population and emigration, so as to overbalance the increase of our necessities, as a people; and knowledge should increase with wealth, inasmuch as no more valuable means can be devised for the appropriation of a surplus income among any people, than to promote education, so long as wisdom exalteth, and ignorance debases; and so long as knowledge with a few is liable to be perverted from its intentions, and become oppressive to the many, who are ignorant of its advantages; and,

From past experience and present necessities, we are strongly inclined to believe that there is something radically wrong in the general and popular principles of education, among the nations from whom we have originated; insomuch that it is very uncommon for any individual to attain to any thing more than a common school education; their colleges and seminaries being so planned, and conducted upon such principles, that the rich only could reach them with their gold; while their books were so written, and clothed in mystery, and technicalities, and unknown language, we could not understand them; so that from the same we could derive very little information during our leisure hours, on any science or profession; and we have been led to doubt, whether such exclusive institutions have been productive of more good, than evil: and

We believe that books, and learning in the arts and sciences, and on all subjects and professions, may be simplified, and be made more Godlike, so as to bring general information within the reach of every common understanding and capacity, as well as the various mechanic trades, or the employment of the farmer; and we feel that a thing good in itself, is good for all alike; and that if education is good for one man, it is good for all men; and if it is good for men it is good for women too; and if it is good for children, it is good for parents; and if it is good for young men, it is good for old men; but the younger they get it, the better it will stay with

them, and the greater use they can make of it; and,

Students in popular colleges and seminaries are not allowed to marry, by which many vices and evils, might be annihilated; or, if they should marry during their years of study, they could never graduate, or receive their diploma; but we are so ignorant of common civility, good manners and correct education, that we do not know what harm there would be in our going to school with our children, any more than there would be in going to meeting or the dinner table, or taking a pleasure ride, or an airing for health, that we do not know any good reason why we should not have the privilege, with them, to improve our education during the winter months, when all labor is suspended in our midst by frost and snow; for many of us are not so old yet, but that we might learn many things which might be profitable and useful, if it was not unpopular; and if all the citizens of a State should go to school, that would certainly make it popular enough for them; and

We earnestly desire that our posterity should be learned, every one of them, so that the learned professions may be destroyed from their midst, and each be his own lawyer, priest, and doctor, so that they may not be imposed upon by the few learned, who may come among us by chance or design, and wish to grow rich on our ignorance, or feast on our labors; for intelligence, liberty and independence are as sweet and sacred to man, purchased by hard labor, as they possibly can be to the rich bought with money; and,

If we do not progress, we feel assured that it will be a natural consequence for us to retrogade in the school of intelligence, and that the simplest and most extensive means of universal education, will be the richest inheritance we can leave to our posterity; and that time is rapidly progressing, so that the State has no moments to lose on this momentous subject; and,

We believe, that man, in his most exalted nature, is self-existent, eternal, imperishable and Godlike; capable of social intercourse with all intelligencies; and that so far as we are at present concerned, our physical and mental, formation and information, lie at the foundation of all our passions and propensities, which may be governed by correct knowledge; and,

So far as we know, the best artists are Nature's children, and universal Nature is the most perfect universal University,

and the most perfect knowledge of Nature tends to the perfection of man, and all true philosophy is founded in Nature, and perfected by Revelation; and under existing systems of education, unless the life of man is prolonged, he must die ignorant of general philosophy, and the true art and science of living, and dying; and

In literature, we believe this to be an age of darkness, and a proper time for reform in the English language, which is rightfully our national institute, or speech; and which is spreading abroad upon the earth, and extending its influence far and wide; and which might be improved by dispensing with all silent letters, as we believe; for, in our ignorance, we know of no use for them; neither do we know of any use for capitals, semi-capitals, and different forms and figures for letters, designed to express the same sound, any more than we do the use of spelling a word one way and pronouncing it another, which, so far as we can comprehend, only tends to confusion and contentions among speakers and writers; and so far as diversity of sentiment exists about spelling, and pronunciation, it is no more than we expect, to find a diversity of opinions about philosophy, grammar, rules of mathematics, and many other things;

Therefore, we, your petitioners, earnestly solicit the immediate attention of your honorable body to the important subject of education; and that you will incorporate the most liberal institution for the benefit of your petitioners, citizens of the State of Deseret, which may have branches in all parts of the State, where they may be needed, and that said institution may provide means, for furnishing well qualified teachers, and books of the most approved kind, divested of all useless orthography, or pronunciation, together with all necessary apparatus, maps, charts, &c., for instruction in all arts, sciences, and professions, and books and teachers for all languages, and instruction free, so that the old and young, rich and poor, men women and children throughout the State, with your petitioners, and future generations, may have the privilege of acquiring the most perfect education possible, and any useful profession, to the overthrow of all monopolies, and the prosperity of our glorious Union; all of which is most earnestly and respectfully submitted, for your consideration, by your petitioners.

Great Salt Lake City, Feb. 8, 1850.